The Cause of the Doukhobortsi should be the Cause of Christendom, and an Appeal for Their Relief, is Manifestly a Righteous One.

The strange spectacle is presented, at the close of the 19th Century, of more than 7000 innocent citizens of Russia being expatriated on account of their conscientious convictions. The Doukhobortsi have for more than a hundred years maintained in southern Russia a religious community of perhaps 12,000 persons, whose distinguishing views have led them to live in and manifest the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ in love to each other and all their fellow beings, and to worship the Almighty in spirit and sincerity. Their non-conformity to the ritual of the Greek Church seems to have been one of the first causes of jealousy against them, among the priesthood where they dwelt; and this, with their conscientious and firm refusal to perform military service under the Russian government, has of late years subjected them to severe persecution. Their chief men have been banished to Siberia; whole villages have been compelled to give up their homes and farms, and remove to cold, mountain districts, while the local authorities as if determined to destroy the entire body of them, have by various methods prevented their obtaining a livelihood. Benevolent men in England hearing of their distressed condition, sent some of their number to investigate the facts, which resulted in arousing a lively interest in their behalf in Great Britain, and in raising large funds to aid in their emigration to other parts.

The Canadian government now offered for each adult of their community 160 acres of land in its northwestern territory free of cost, and they were relieved, as to their scruples against bearing arms, by a recent wise and beneficent Act of the Canadian Legislature, exempting from military demands all who, by their conscientious convictions, cannot perform military service. After due investigation the offer was accepted, and during last winter and early summer more than 7000 of the Doukhobortsi embarked for North America, and are now located in the districts of Assiniboia, Saskatchewan and Prince Albert, about 300 miles northwest from the City of Winnipeg. Arriving there, with very scanty supplies, they found themselves in an open prairie country, nearly uninhabited. They were obliged forthwith to build such rude huts for shelter as they could construct out of logs and mud, while they were wanting in horses and oxen, wagons, farming implements, seeds, and nearly everything necessary to agriculture. Some of the latter have been partially supplied by benevolent persons, and a small amount of land was ploughed and planted in the early summer.

A large part of the immigrants, however, arrived too late to raise crops, even if they had possessed the necessary equipment. Now, the cold weather of that northern region is imminent, and these people in their extremity and destitution must be generously helped by Christian sympathizers, to tide over the ensuing ten months with food and clothing, or many of them may perish.

They are a people of much intelligence, untiring industry, and show astonishing skill in utilizing the few resources at their command. As a sect, they are remarkable for the simplicity of their principles and practices, and the depth of their religious experience. Their chantings at times of religious service consist mainly of hymns and psalm-like prayers, together with adorations and pious sentiments, closely resembling the language of the Scriptures which is the more surprising in view of the almost total deprivation of the sacred volume to which, for a long period, they have been subjected.

The civilized and Christian world has lately been intensely interested by the call of the Emperor of Russia for a conference of all Nations, to consider the subject of arbitration and gradual disarmament; the result was, the assembling at the Hague, of some of the most intelligent men the Nations could delegate as their Representatives. The gathering of this Historic Congress marked an advancing era for civilization, and gave an encouraging hope to Christians the world over, that a step was at last being taken toward the period when war would be learned no more. How far its avowed objects have been promoted, or how soon they will be attained, must be left, for the future historian to record.

"It is not by might, nor by power," that the great reformations of the world are to be brought about; and it is a singular co-incidence that notwithstanding the commendable objects of the Conference at the Hague, and the character of the assemblage gathered to discuss them, the most practical exemplification of disarmament was given in 1895 by a band of harmless, faithful Christians of the Russian Nation, burning arms which were their personal property, in the presence of cruel persecutors; thus, in their quiet humble way, preaching loudly to all Christendom.

When the time shall come, that the people throw down their arms, or refuse to take them up, then will war cease. This might mean persecution, suffering, or even martyrdom, to those who thus obey their conscientious convictions; but it is then, and then only, we shall see disarmament made effectual for the world.

The early Christians had their share in this movement for the peace of the Nations; and they have had their faithful successors down the ages, from generation to generation, but the most impressive lesson of latter years has come from the now suffering Doukhobortsi. Can the followers of Him who said, "My Kingdom is not of this World,"—can peace-loving Christians anywhere, fail to sympathize with these exiled Russians, in this their hour of extremity?

It is estimated that the sum of seventy-five thousand dollars ($75,000) will be needed for the relief of the 7000 Doukhobors now in the Dominion of Canada. They may be depended on for becoming self supporting, at as early a date as under their present circumstances could be expected of any race of people. Shall this call to their fellow Christians everywhere for temporary, but prompt and liberal aid, be in vain?

Remittances for their relief may be sent to Wm. F. McCreary, Commissioner of Immigration, Winnipeg, Manitoba, or if forwarded to William Evans, Treasurer, No. 252 South Front Street, Philadelphia, Pa., care will be taken by a Committee of the religious Society of Friends of Philadelphia, for a judicious use of the means thus afforded.

SAMUEL MORRIS, EPHRAIM SMITH,
JONATHAN E. RHOADS, GEORGE M. COMFORT,
JOSEPH S. ELKINTON, WM. L. BAILEY,
WM. EVANS,

Committee of the Meeting for Sufferings to aid the Doukhobortsi.